Discover Islam Series – Issue # 4

PREFACE

As the question of "faith" belongs to the realm of the ultimate unprovables (in a philosophical and mathematical sense), it is indeed a matter of trust by which one accepts whatever he believes. Certainly one owes it to himself to ponder on issues such as why he should hold *any* beliefs regarding ultimate truths, and *what* he can believe with confidence.

Man accepts his own existence as he observes his own actions, contemplates his own motivations, exercises his conscience, desires justice in his world, and generally as he participates in life as it comes to him. He has neither created himself, nor asked to be created. He has not even chosen his parentage or his time and location on earth. Discovering his true nature, his purpose on earth and his ultimate end can be straightforward if pursued without preconceived dogma, and if one is prepared to accept some personal help and guidance from his Creator, and is fully committed to adopting and implementing what he may discover and come to accept. A faith, or trust in God's wisdom and provision, is a reliable means for most efficiently adapting to the nature with which man finds himself to have been designed.

An attempt is made in this booklet to put together various steps in the mental process, forming a network of rationally acceptable associations, which may allow one to reassess the validity of his religious presuppositions, reorienting himself so as to see "religion" as a comprehensive and appropriate orientation to life. The Islamic viewpoint presented here may be of interest to a person of a Faith other than Islam, enabling him to look at the matter of faith from another, alternative and perhaps insightful, angle.

Our discussion proceeds in a relatively sequential order, and as far as possible, is kept philosophically simple and brief. If it is felt that a certain Islamic point needs some clarification or elaboration, the reader is requested to refer to further literature on the subject, which can be made available on request.

May Allah reward Dr. Linda Thayer for editing this text and making constructive suggestions, and Shaikh Essam Eshaq for critically reviewing its contents.

Syed R. Ali

Bahrain
January, 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. FAITH

II. GOD

Faith in God
B. Obstacles to Faith in God

III. MAN

IV. GUIDANCE FOR MAN

A. Divine Revelation
B. Culmination of Revealed Guidance
C. Self-surrender to God
D. Obstacles to Pure Faith

V. RATIONAL RELIGION

Appendix: The Qur'an as Optimal Scripture

I. FAITH

What is usually meant by 'faith'?

In the most general sense, our belief in whatever we cannot or do not directly know, observe, or feel with our five senses is called '**faith'**. Most commonly '**faith**' refers to what one believes about the nature of the world and his place in it, and about his origin and destiny; all of this is taken together as a foundation for trust in an ultimate force or power, upon whom one relies for provision and guidance. In theological usage '**Faith**' (with a capital 'F') may imply a conviction regarding doctrines and dogmas which must be believed in order to be included as a member of an organized religion. In other contexts '**Faith**' refers to the essence of a religion in terms of its history, traditions, ritual and mystic experience, sociological manifestations, etc.

Having faith in the ultimate power at work in the universe, produces a mental state of assurance from which emerges a sense of security, a feeling of satisfaction that the road to ultimate success[1] and salvation[2] has been found. It is an inner experience that gratifies 'the heart'. It functions as a personal fulfillment that brings contentment in the face of distress and motivates courage in the face of adversity.

What is the general attitude of people towards faith?

To have faith is a natural inclination in man. As a rule, people possess a certain Faith without having chosen it for themselves. They adopt a particular Faith that is passed on to them from their forefathers. Even if they do not practice it, they may adhere to it by blind imitation, and accept it out of respect and identification with their elders. Certain universal truths and values expressed in that Faith serve as a base for them to cling to, whatever they may actually believe in their private moments. Factors such as social identity and bonding motivate them to continue maintaining that Faith. As such, it may not matter to them whether certain beliefs or practices in their Faith make any balanced sense or not. No wonder we find people holding to a Faith that is guided by myths, miracles, or superstitions, or even by theological tenets based on conjectures, misconceptions and misapprehensions.

Often it is precisely this attitude within a person which makes him hold onto whatever Faith he professes. He may come to believe the rightness, or even superiority, of the Faith professed by his own social group. He may not be particularly interested in looking around elsewhere for ascertaining the universal truth, if he is not prepared to see beyond the bounds of his social group. Thus it is that a variety of Faiths prevails among mankind, and it is a paradox that people of every Faith claim to profess the correct one. As regards those who are not convinced of their own Faith and feel uncomfortable with it, they may disregard all

---

1 'Success' implies one's accomplishment of the purpose of his or her existence.

2 'Salvation' may be understood as a state of being safe (or the act of deliverance) from loss, curse, suffering, etc. In a theological sense it would mean admission to eternal bliss and escape from punishment for one's wrong attitudes and behavior.

other Faiths too, presuming that every Faith is beset with the same problem.

Having noticed the diversity in peoples' attitude towards Faith, one may suggest a more basic question: Does one need to have a Faith at all?!

Is it vital for us to have a clearly defined 'Faith' when we know that such Faiths deal with the 'unknowables'?

One's life style, in its various aspects, is the reflection of what he believes. All our deeds and even our thoughts are guided, in one way or the other, by the Faith we possess. If one's belief is not clearly defined, this creates certain confusions. Right faith prompts right actions. Lack of faith amounts to survival without direction in life. And this tends to generate emptiness or dissatisfaction and disillusionment with living, leading to a distrust of others and to a degeneration of personal values and interpersonal bonds.

What prompts us to be concerned about faith?

There are two observable and undeniable facts regarding our existence, deserving our serious attention. Each observation raises some questions.

Observation 1: We exist in this world for a certain period of time.

Questions:
- How then are we to live a self-fulfilling and meaningful life, and for this venture what should be the guiding principles?
- What is the purpose and ultimate significance of our existence; if our existence is purposeless then isn't everything we do ultimately futile and worthless?

Observation 2: Our physical life in this world will come to an end one day.

Questions:
- What will happen to us after death?
- What are the implications for our present earthly life?

Let us consider these two areas of concern and look into each of them in turn, in order to enable us to arrive at some reasonable answers.

Question **1: MAKING SENSE OF OUR EXISTENCE**

How can we lead a satisfying life in accordance with our own in-born nature?

One point of view might be that we humans are intelligent beings and can work out an appropriate manner of life for ourselves. Another view might be that there are some basic guidelines provided for us, which we would be wise to discover and follow.

The first view has its own logic. Based on our own accumulated wisdom and experience, we should be able to choose a way of life that we judge to be the most convenient and beneficial to us; we do not need any other source to guide us. The second view also has its own presuppositions and arguments, and deserves to be

examined for its validity; it cannot be rejected outright.

The first point of view implies that:

- We should direct all our efforts towards attaining material progress and comfort so as to bring about a basic happiness to life.

- At the same time we should keep experimenting with different norms and values in life till we hit upon the most satisfactory course, thus pursuing a trial-and-error procedure. Each person and each generation would repeat this process, although a certain body of wisdom would be generated and passed on from previous generations.

The Human Tragedy!

If man has indeed been in a position to properly formulate a workable system for ordering human affairs, is he by now able to arrive at satisfactory solutions to all his problems, and to guide his life suitably in peace and harmony? How successful has man been?

Now looking at the situation of man today, our philosophers, religious leaders and political analysts tell us that we live in an era that is unprecedented in material civilization and progress, achieved through great advances in education, science and technology. But, it is also an age of tremendous upheaval, chaos and uncertainty wherein humanity seems to have lost its way and is continually on the brink of new and even more unprecedented disasters. The living standard that man enjoys today is many times higher than it was a century ago, but that does not reflect life as many times happier and more humane. The social environment displays a greedy hedonism and a vulgar materialism, in which a desire for power, money, popularity, beauty, sex, etc., have become the driving forces in life. The humanity that has been able to leap to the moon, is still limping on the earth. Man has learned to fly through the air with birds and travel through the waters with fish, but how to live on the earth, he still does not know.

Studies conducted in so-called "developed" countries show rising crime and corruption, a higher percentage of psychiatric patients and suicides, more cases of alcohol and drug addiction, rampant family disintegration and juvenile delinquency, etc. The more comfort and abundance, the more the feeling of emptiness, despair, disaffection and hopelessness. What does all this mean? It means that material advancement is not the only thing desirable in our lives, nor the most important ingredient to help us to lead a humane life.

In the words of the British philosopher Bertrand Russell[3]:

> "Broadly speaking, we are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends... Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil just as much as for good. It follows that unless man increases in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow."

But where can we look for this "wisdom" which would be able to rescue man from "sorrow"? When someone comes up with a certain "wisdom", can we be confident in its judgment and certain about its dependability? Or, have we no other choice than to keep experimenting unceasingly, holding on to a particular ideology and path till such time when it is proved defective or ineffective by loss of human life and resources? Is each individual on his own in this search, or is there a kind of

[3] *Impact of Science on Society*, by Bertrand Russell, 1953, pp. 120-121

"help line"?

The second point of view, which urges man towards faith in a Merciful, Almighty, All-Wise Law-Giver, claims that the present plight of human beings does indeed result fundamentally from loss of direction, loss of purpose and loss of meaning in life, a failure to rise above the mundane, or a failure to adopt a wholesome, reliable system of values. One may even have rejected outright what he knows to be good in preference to something more exciting or promising. In other words, it is the result of losing or failing to follow the right path.

The above discussion leads us to the following questions, which seek definitive answers:

- What is 'good' and what is 'evil' for man?

- What is the basis or standard by which to define and judge the 'good' and the 'evil'?

- What are the ultimate values to which human behavior should conform?

- Who is to prescribe these values? Who is the genuine and prime authority?

These same matters similarly arise in regard to the second concern to be raised by anyone exploring the meaning of faith, i.e., his situation after death.

Question **2: LIFE AFTER DEATH**

What will happen to us after death?

This seems to be a simple theoretical question with philosophical overtones, but it is indeed a matter of grave concern. Every sane person, at some point of time in life -- especially when age advances -- asks himself this question.

One answer could be that nothing more happens to us after death; we die, our bodies disintegrate into the earth and our children go on without us. This possibility has its own rationale.

The other possibility is that we move on to another plane of existence. This view can not be dismissed on the grounds that we have no physically observable evidence for it. The possibility that something further will take place cannot be ruled out. Since a great majority of people has always strongly held this view, it needs to be examined for validity. And of course, there is no positive modern scientific evidence to say that nothing more happens. A better answer is to say that one does not know, rather than to conclude on an uninformed basis that probably nothing more will happen. If someone is not aware of a danger, it does not mean that there is no danger. Ignorance of, or indifference to, a reality does not make the reality disappear.

Most of us, thus, want an answer to this question as part of the process of understanding ourselves. But where does the answer lie? Would we be able to find the answer by means of using our own personal methods of discovery and reasoning? Whatever the answer is going to be, what degree of credibility can we give to it?

POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR ANSWERS TO SUCH QUESTIONS

Where can we find the correct answers to the various questions concerning our life here and in the here-after?

Let us enumerate first a variety of possible sources of knowledge available to us, which might be able to help us in seeking our answers. We can mention the following:

(a) instinct, innate nature
(b) the external senses
(c) intellect, philosophy, science
(d) intuition or personal/mystic experience
(e) traditional mythology and literature

Unfortunately, no one can be sure of getting the right answers with the help of these sources alone because all these sources of knowledge are limited and too subjective to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of what can be called '**ultimate reality**'. The matters related to ultimate reality fall beyond the realm of human observation, perception and deductive faculties. Just as science cannot provide norms/rules for human conduct, neither can it address the question of the purpose of our existence/creation. As regards mystic experience, this tends to be an individual's personal, self-focused, self-satisfying, and passive experience. It may come up with ideas inconsistent with the established facts or accepted principles, or it might conflict with a similar experience claimed by other individuals, and hence be prone to misguidance. Moreover, mythology is culture-specific and is likely to promote the self-interests of some sectors of society over others. Even the modern scientific enterprise has its own mythology which elevates the 'scientific' community above other scholars. The prestige of such science is valid only within a limited sphere for defined purposes. Clearly, none of these sources of knowledge is dependable enough for our purposes.

At best, a person can propound a hypothesis or a philosophy -- a product of his mind -- and claim to have succeeded simply at grasping some part of the reality. But still he can never be truly certain about it. In the final analysis man is helpless to come up with truly reliable and irrefutable answers.

Does this not lead us to think of another possible source of knowledge? Consider the One who is the Source of everything -- the Creator!

II. GOD

A. FAITH IN GOD

Would this mean, in the first place, believing that there is some 'wholly other' Being who has intentionally created us?

Of course, yes. We would have to be open to the implications which follow from the existence of God, and to what these implications would mean for a sober and complete orientation towards life. As we will see later, this is not something which

has to be accepted blindly, but rather something that appeals to our reason and offers a satisfying explanation to the mind-boggling questions related to ultimate reality.

Recognizing the existence of God is, in fact, instinctive, uncomplicated and natural. It is in the innate nature of man to acknowledge a supreme power who is controlling the affairs of the universe. This has never been an invention or achievement of the human mind. This innate and potential belief, however, can remain dormant; it needs activation and actualization if it is to become focused and functional in a personally and socially beneficial way.

Most people in the world, whatever Faith they may belong to, do believe in the existence of a Supreme Almighty Being. Throughout the history of mankind a doubt concerning the existence of God has only rarely been a serious issue for discussion. Doubts are generally directed towards one's personal understanding of the Supreme Being.

How can we know anything about God, if He is beyond the realm of human perception?

It is true that a creature cannot fully comprehend the Creator, who does not share our time and space mode of being. Howsoever we might try to perceive God in terms of our conceptual levels, we cannot succeed. But it is certainly within our mental and spiritual capacities to arrive at the innate awareness that a Supreme Being, a Creator, surely exists. This awareness awakens a meaningful conviction, provided there is a willingness to accept some divine input in coordination with a trust in God, or, a personal faith.

When we closely look into the various phenomena in nature with an inquisitive mind, inspecting the wonders of the universe, pursuing a deeper understanding of the intricate structure and functioning of the created things (both our environment. and ourselves), it is hard to believe that these phenomena are the result of a blind chance or coincidence. Our contemplation points us to an awesome ultimate Designer and Director, a Wise, Supreme creative Power behind the scenes.

For example, consider the **human brain** – relatively small in size for so complicated a structure, yet controlling the whole body through the unconscious reflexes and through the thinking processes. It is known that the human mind works like a computer, and that the brain contains 6 million cells, each cell being equivalent to the most powerful man-made computer. We can say that 6 million of the most powerful computer machines are needed to imitate the human brain! Furthermore, a computer does not operate unless an operating system is put into its memory. And then an application program is needed to put it into use. If the brain's materialistic existence is the result of a coincidence, then how can we explain that the brain – a kind of computer – started working without an operating system in it! How could different urges and emotions of love, sympathy, kindness, hatred, etc. (kinds of software), originate in it? Who is the programmer who put in the initial information required for its operation? How is it that the human being goes through life continually making choices which affect himself and others? Can we believe that a mere coincidence or chance has produced such an amazing brain?

As another example, look at the beautifully colored, artistic designs on the wings of a butterfly. Can coincidence and chance explain this marvelous artwork with geometric accuracies appearing on the wings of a flying insect, developed out of a caterpillar, hatched out of a tiny egg?

Some people object that we do not have any "direct" evidence for the existence of God. But have these asked what other kind of "direct" evidence one could expect to find for a being who exists outside the dimensions and parameters of the human observer?! In fact, we believe in many other things without direct evidence. For example, we believe in the existence of air when it blows, though we cannot see the air, or, we believe in the flow of an electric current when we look at a light bulb glowing, though we don't see the current flowing. It means that we deduce the existence of a cause through its effects, even if we do not have any direct observable evidence for the cause. It is logical, accordingly, to believe that there has to be a cause, an absolute and primordial cause, for all the causes and effects that take place in the universe.

Thus man is naturally drawn to the conclusion that the existence of a creation in and of itself constitutes evidence for a Creator.

If it was God who has created the universe, then who created God?

- Does God need a creator? Such a question arises as a result of a delusion or a wrong understanding about God, wherein the universe (creation) and God (the Creator) are considered to be both of the same substance, or when both are put on an equal footing.

- If God needs a creator, it would mean that there was a time when He did not exist, and some one brought Him into existence. It would also mean that the creator is a part of the total creation, and is not apart from, or distinct from, the creation.

- God, by definition, is the one who "creates"; He is not the one who "has been created", or who "is materialized in the form of something created". If there is some being who is creatable, it can not be called God. In other words the question of who created God would be as if asking: who created the uncreatable? This is a self-contradictory question, a question arising from a self-contradicting, fuzzy concept.

- For the sake of illustration, let us say for example, it was 'X' who created God. Then the next question would be: who created 'X'? In answer to this, let us say, 'Y' created 'X'. Then it would follow again to ask who created 'Y'. This way the argument will go on and on. It will be a never-ending mental exercise which would lead us nowhere. Could such a series of creations ever terminate anywhere at an ultimate creator, a primordial creator? If not so, wouldn't this mean that something can create itself, when it did not previously exist so as to act as creator? And if so, on the other hand, then the creator at this ultimate end point would be the Absolute Creator, the Creator of all the creators, the Creator of all the causes which produce effects, Himself the uncaused Cause. Yes, this Creator or Ultimate Cause could be referred to as God. But would such an Ultimate All-powerful Cause ever need subordinate intermediary helpers? Of course not.

- As an analogy to the astronomical size of the universe and its continuing creation, we may refer to the mathematical concept of 'infinity', symbolized as "∞". When a sequence of numbers is extended out further and further in a patterned way, its mathematical representation is ended up, writing an 'infinity' sign. Similarly, the entire line of creation is to be thought of as infinity. The infinity that we refer to in this case is beyond our grasp, as is "God". Any number divided by zero (0) equals 'infinity' ($1/0 = \infty$, $2/0 = \infty$, etc.). We complete this mathematical expression by simply putting an 'infinity' sign as the

answer, though we do not comprehend the actual nature of 'infinity'. Similarly, we can arrive at the conclusion that a Creator does exist even though we do not, in any human terms, comprehend His essence or ultimate nature. Perhaps we are better able to grasp what He is *not* (i.e., finite), rather than what He is.[4]

If the *essence* and *origin* of God cannot be understood, then how can we deal with our urge to have this knowledge?

Let us leave aside asking about the essence of the Creator, for we do not know even about the nature and origin of many things created, such as 'life' or 'energy', for example. The urge to take on such questions can be relieved or eliminated if one realizes that it is absolutely of no use to keep thinking about the matters which can never be "understood" by any human means, and have never been understood. The human mind has its own capacity and limitation. Trying to comprehend the things which are not within its capacity, is simply "barking up the wrong tree". How is it possible that we, finite and limited as we are, could have a correct understanding of the Infinite?

Instead, the more fruitful line of thinking would be to concern ourselves with matters which are relevant to our lives -- those which are of practical importance to us. For example, the question such as whether God exists or not, is a legitimate one, because based on its answer we formulate a system for operating our lives. And this is a question for which we are equipped to arrive at an answer. On the other hand, a question such as from where has God come, or, what is His essence, has no particular practical significance or relevance to us, nor do we have any means to arrive at an answer to such questions. Now suppose we could arrive at an answer, we might still ask: "So what?" For this would be merely an academic exercise, having no significance in behavioral terms for organizing our efforts and determining our choices in life.

B. OBSTACLES TO FAITH IN GOD

For some, belief in God may lose credibility when confronted by clever argument: How can He be Almighty God if there are certain things He cannot do, such as creating another God, or changing the past, or making a shape both square and round at the same time. Can this dilemma be explained?

As a matter of fact, God is free to do whatever He chooses, and He has the power over all things. But this does not mean that He should be able to create another God, or to change the past. This is not because God is weak, but because these examples do not describe anything that makes sense within the order which He has chosen to establish. One is asking God to change the rules of our existing universe, which He has designed according to His own wisdom, without consulting any of us! For example, a shape being both square and round at the same time, does not make any sense in our mode of being, for if something is square, according to present rules, this means it is not round. Similarly, if something is 'past', it is already fixed as having taken place, and any change in it will not belong to the same 'past' any

[4] Accordingly, the Islamic creed states: "There is no deity but God ...". The Creator's existence is thus to be understood as an absence of plurality or duplication/replication and as an absolute uniqueness. This is an accurate way of stating God's wholeness, indivisibility, exclusiveness and awesome, eternal presence in a mode of being unlike ours. This is the concept of 'Oneness' of God or monotheism.

more. As for the creation of another God, the statement contradicts the very definition of God, for God is the one who 'creates', and not the one who can be created. God has neither come into being by creating Himself, nor has He ever created another unique being like Himself. He alone is the exclusive, unique God.

Thus we can see that these and similar examples which some people cite to test the omnipotence of God involve self-contradiction, and thus do not weaken the credibility of faith in God.

Isn't it true that belief in God is contradictory to scientific understanding?

No, but it is true that belief in God is ultimately above and beyond scientific understanding. As God is not part of His own creation, He is outside the realm of what can be investigated by humans, existing as they do, within the created universe with which we are familiar. Nevertheless, the idea of God is not a blind belief, but a conviction supported by reason and knowledge. Science, in fact, provides good grounds for belief in God. A scientific background induces us to reflect on scientific discoveries, and thus contributes concepts and foundations which draw us close to the idea of a Supreme Power. The outstanding scientist Albert Einstein felt compelled to say:

> "Faith is the strongest and noblest result of scientific research."

The French biologist Jean Rostand, shortly before his death, during one of his talks on television, was asked a question concerning God. His reply was that until then he had not believed in the existence of God, but as a biologist he admitted that he was at a loss for words when he contemplated the activity that took place at the infinitesimally small cellular level. Similarly, Dr. Irving William, a professor of Natural Sciences in the USA, was quoted as saying:

> "I believe in God's existence because I cannot imagine that coincidence alone can explain to us the appearance of the first electrons, protons, atoms, amino acids, the first protoplasm, seed, or even the first brain. I believe in the existence of God because His Divine Existence is *the only rational explanation* of ALL the features of the universe we can see about us." (Emphasis added)

In the Philosophy of Science it is not accepted that something can create itself, nor is it accepted that anything can come into existence out of nothing. Then how could the universe by itself come into existence in a meticulously and methodically organized manner? How could everything in it, from the tiniest electron to the immensely vast galaxies be governed with such a marvelous skill, intelligence, and limitless perfection? Is it possible that while science can describe the numerous intricate systems operative in our world, each coordinated with the others in perfect harmony, yet these *descriptions* are simply convenient accounts of all observed phenomena – not relevant to the actual operational forces of the life processes and cycles in nature? Does any reflective person rationally believe that all this could be the result of coincidence or chance?

Take the analogy of a dictionary, wherein words are arranged in an alphabetical order. If someone says that there was an explosion in the printer's shop, whereby the trays of letters were scattered every which way, and by coincidence they appeared in an arranged order, can our scientific mind accept that? Is this universal arrangement possible without somebody having brought it about? In fact, this same kind of remarkable order and organization are found for everything in nature. Why do we find the successful arrangements everywhere

(which the Evolutionists call 'random' or 'chance') and *none* of the unsuccessful ones anywhere, *except* in man-made enterprise?

The simplest and most-inclusive explanation to the state of affairs described above is provided by the existence of a single designing and coordinating Creator, who exists outside His creation.

We must remember that the recognition of God cannot be a matter for our senses alone, or for scientific experimentations alone, because if this were the case, the question of "faith" in God would not arise. It is by reflective contemplation and by an involvement of the heart that one is prompted to believe in the Absolute Almighty God. The fact remains that when we do believe in God, it is *although* we do not see Him with our eyes or touch Him with our hands. Our faith depends upon a non-material dimension of our being, something beyond science.

Isn't it correct that Darwin's theory of evolution undermines faith in God?

No. Evolution, or to be accurate, mutation, as it takes place within the confines of a species is an undeniable fact. But the hypothesis that man has descended from apes, a distinct species, is a different matter. This theory which had been gaining popularity over the last century, however, can no longer be seen to constitute an argument that threatens to undercut faith in God. The following points need to be considered.

- Darwin simply proposed a hypothesis concerning the origin of species as a tentative explanatory organization of his data, or objective observations. A theory, by definition, is not a fact but a hypothesis or a suggestion that needs to be tested and supported with an accumulation of later evidence. Unlike Einstein's theory of Relativity, which was validated subsequently with more data, what Darwin put forward **has remained an unsubstantiated theory** even after a period of 125 years.

- As the hypothesis itself admits, it **contains many missing links**. The theorists themselves agree that they have failed to give a proper explanation to many observed facts. Certain gaping holes in the Darwinian theory cannot be filled by reference to scientifically observed processes. The theory is not able to explain the basic steps in "evolution":

  a- How could the genes under the blueprint of an organism of the first bacterial cell have originated from an inorganic (inanimate) form of matter?

  b- How did the bacterial cell change into a more complex cell, and then this complex cell, in turn, evolve into a primitive multi-cellular organism?

- The theory is based upon the concept of "natural selection", i.e., that the evolutionary process takes place only when there is a need for it (e.g., giraffes grew long necks as they needed to eat the leaves of tall trees). We must ask what was the need which made man to develop fast and evolve into such a remarkable intellectual and social creature that he is unmatched by any of the other two billion species which have existed on this earth.

- Evolution is conceived to be governed by a process which improves the ability of a species to live in a more efficient manner in any particular environment ("the survival of the fittest"). It does not take away the already existing good

features. Then how come man has shown some negative trends? (If indeed modern man has evolved from an ancestor common to monkeys/apes and ancient man, then why is a new-born human infant so dependent on his parents for a relatively much longer time as compared to the offspring of a monkey?)

- Modern scientific data obtained from research in **genetics, molecular biology and the study of chromosomes, have invalidated this theory**. For example, the existence of genes implies that a particular phylum cannot produce a certain class naturally derived from another phylum, and that a particular family from within a specific class cannot one day appear from within another class[5]. While the process of natural selection influences certain characteristics of a species and while *change* ('mutation') does take place within a species, it has never been shown to *create a new species* ('evolution').

- It should be pointed out here that Darwin's work has played two roles. The first is scientific, which is far from being solidly grounded. The second one is philosophical, providing arguments **to support atheism in the confrontation between religion and science** that raged in the 19th century Western world. A basic hostility towards religious teaching was already existing, and in Darwin's theory certain people saw what seemed to be a decisive argument. Based upon shaky scientific data, they defended what was no more than an ideology. The theory was conveniently and probably convincingly used to prove that man could have descended from apes, thus discrediting the Biblical teachings concerning the origin of man as a creation of the wise and merciful God. It was through a subtle ideology or philosophical dialectics – rather than scientific rationality – that this theory could become popular, and has continued to survive in an environment where people wanted to see themselves as self-sufficient and superior, able to break loose from the traditional irrational grip of their religious tradition.

Then why is this theory still widely endorsed among scientists?

Many scientists, because of their academic upbringing, are still culturally conditioned to having a hardened attitude towards and intolerance of (or at best an indifference to) any suggestion of the supernatural. To the atheist, a mention of the supernatural seems an outdated attempt for the superstitious religious establishment to control the academic enterprise, even in cases where science encounters enigmas. Yet the fact remains that when these theorists, who would have an explanation for everything, are asked where the origin of genetic information lies, or how highly organized matter, complete with informational data to control its functioning and reproduction, came to be formed, they are at a loss for words. The entire network of metabolic reaction is not only strictly coordinated, but also is oriented towards its own perpetual preservation and reproduction. Such scientists do not want to recognize it to be the work of a wise designer or a programmer – an explanation which in no way contradicts the observed facts. If they could shed their fear of a science that raises questions about [the taboo subject of] religion[6], they could accept the extreme probability of the existence of God, and

---

5 Based on their distinctive characteristics, living beings are classified broadly into phyla, each phylum being subdivided into classes, each class into orders, each order into families, each family into genera, and the genera containing different species displaying both collective and specific defining characteristics.

6 Unfortunately, the history of science is replete with examples in which scientific investigation and discovery has been confronted by representatives of the European Church and accused of usurping the rights of God. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find an unconscious reactionary bias against all religious enterprise as being emotional and irrational.

thus just as easily be believers in God as they have been confirmed agnostics or atheists.

It is important to note that it is by reducing man to physico-chemical and biological 'laws' that the theory has its dangerous implications. Man loses any respect and regard for humane values when he becomes a follower of the *survival of the fittest* concept. History documents how compassion, sacrifice, and consideration for fellow humans and other creatures, has little impact under *the law of the jungle* philosophy.

Rather, it is an enlightened understanding of the positive (i.e., good) in-born nature of man and of his honored position amongst the rest of creation which saves us from this dangerous dead-end street, at which Western man has arrived through an obdurate mindset against the idea of God.

How is it that some people even insist that there cannot be any God?

There have been individuals and groups of people, usually with an 'intellectual' bent, who do not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. There are various reasons why people develop atheistic attitudes. Some of the main reasons are as follows:

1) Some people do not believe in God because they want to explain everything through **logic and science**. This approach itself is ill-conceived. It assumes that only the objects of the senses are 'real' and these alone are the proper objects to be rationally considered.

   One may fail to realize that not every matter can be judged according to traditional Aristotelian logic, or explained through the current state of our science. The English philosopher Francis Bacon has insightfully said:

   > "A little philosophy brings man to atheism; diving deep into it brings him back into faith."

2) Some people start doubting their religion when they are **confused by the dogmas** of their particular Faith, whereupon they feel that religion as a whole is an absurd thing. So they resort to an outright rejection of all religions, including putting aside what may once have been a faith in God. Such rejection is usually based upon whatever little knowledge one may possess about his own religion, rather than upon a thorough and penetrating investigation of the confusing issues.

   They do not realize that a dogma may merit rejection, but faith in God does not. The main reason for such an attitude of rejection is that many presentations concerning religion focus upon distinctive dogmas rather than upon insightful knowledge of God or upon attaining to faith.

3) Some people lose their acceptance of religion when they notice **hypocrisy in the deeds and behavior** among 'religious' people. They have a peculiar notion that anyone who says that he believes in God should at once become a perfect saint. When this does not happen, then that believer must be a fraud or a hypocrite. If a number of hypocrites are found, then the blame is put upon religion and upon the belief in God.

   One may forget that the principles of a Faith are one thing and the practices of its followers are another. Few believers have arrived at perfection in their faith.

4) History has witnessed numerous conflicts, quarrels and even **bloodshed in the name of religion**. Some people believe that the mistake lies with religion, and accordingly they reject the very idea of God. Human beings, by nature, in any and every Faith, are liable to make mistakes. Those who adhere to a religion may not be knowledgeable about their religion, or may be driven essentially by the emotions rather than by the mind or conscience.

One needs to realize that professing a religion is not the end of the road; it is rather the beginning of a lifelong journey in which one is prone to stumble and fall as a result of various acts of negligence or wrong choices.

5) Some people become atheists **out of convenience**; they are not mentally prepared to adhere to the demands of Faith at the cost of giving up their personal freedom, comfort, and enjoyment. If they were to have faith in God they would lose the freedom to behave as they desire, disregarding the rights and needs of others. They do not want any restrictions in the pursuit of their own self-determined goals.

The fallacy in such a notion of 'freedom' is that it kicks away all boundaries, except the self-imposed ones, based upon a necessarily limited personal experience, losing a proper farsightedness, thus leading one to adopt wrong paths. One may fail to understand that the legitimate restrictions as prescribed by the Faith, are in fact directed at disciplining and enriching life within an overall perspective (for both the individual and the society), rather than at making it difficult.

6) The relatively large number of modern-day atheists and agnostics are the products of the **materialistic environment** in which they are brought up and educated. They may feel that they are too busy to spare time for matters like thinking about God; they may consider this a trivial, and even an unattainable, subject. Thus they get stuck in a world-view which values the 'Seen', to the exclusion of the 'Unseen'. Such is the mentality imposed by a secular society. In this way, one's natural urge to recognize the Supreme Power is severely suppressed and does not get a proper chance to develop and activate.

We may point out here that even these people have an instinctive tendency to call upon, or base their hope upon, some supreme invisible power – which they may or may not call "God" – at times of great danger, deprivation or difficulty.

It is also a fact that many people from the above categories, who have a reflective mind and are not stubbornly locked into atheism, turn to belief in the existence of God at some point of time in their lives. Generally this happens under the following circumstances:

- When they approach old age, their self-sufficient attitude may weaken. This is the time when people usually develop a more mature assessment of life. Their curiosity and common sense succeed in taking them beyond the physical or material fulfillment in life; they renew their look for meaning in their existence. In the process, they become convinced of the divine existence.

- When a tragedy or a calamity befalls them and they are caught up in a hopeless situation of despair, their soul-searching instinct may cause them to discover the existence of God.

- When they are exposed to a social environment that is congenial to developing faith in God, their dormant innate predisposition to recognize the Creator is stimulated, leading them to become a believer in God.

The nature of man is such that, in general and especially in his younger days, he is more attached to and concerned with matters at hand and of immediate consequence, rather than those more remote. In order to get a proper perspective with a broader outlook, he needs to have an insight into issues such as who he is, his position in the scheme of creation, and the aim and purpose of his existence.

III. MAN

What is man?

Man is not simply a glorified machine, a collection of tissues and bones, with a computer at its top, governed by physical, biological and biochemical laws, reacting mechanically as "programmed" by his emotions, environment and biochemical processes. He is not just another animal, to be guided merely by instinct and senses. He is certainly a cut above that. Not only does he possess an outward aspect, the physical body, but also he has a less observable inner aspect -- including the mind, the heart, the will and the soul.

Man is a composite of many aspects, levels and functions, inner and outer, the totality of which represents the human creature. Each element of his nature has its role and function, its legitimate needs and a right to the satisfaction of these needs. He is to be considered as an indivisible organic whole integrating all the outward and inward aspects of his existence. It is undeniable that he occupies a distinctive position in the overall creation.

What is the position of man in God's creation?

Man possesses certain powers and qualities that distinguish him from the rest of the creation. He is endowed with:

- the gift of intelligence & wisdom, enabling him to think & reflect, to analyze & reason

- the capacity for sophisticated conceptualization and expression in language, with an urge to acquire knowledge and to invent new things based upon his insight and need

- the ability to judge between right and wrong, and a conscience which both accuses him and justifies his thoughts and acts

- a certain measure of freedom in will and action.

Other creatures are subservient to him. In spite of his relatively weak physical stature, man is in a position, by virtue of his other in-born qualities, to exercise a certain amount of control over all other living beings on earth, ranging from micro-organisms to the giant animals far more powerful than he is. He is created with the power and capabilities to become the greatest explorer of, and experimenter with, God's laws in nature and to conquer space. In short, the human being can be seen as the 'crown' of the creation, entrusted with both privilege and responsibility.

If man is the crown of the creation, then how is it that he can experience such sharp conflicts of good and evil within himself in spite of possessing the greatest level of intellect and reason?

Although man possesses certain superior qualities and powers that distinguish him from the rest of the creatures around him, he is susceptible to certain negative qualities also, such as ego, arrogance, greed, weakness to temptations, jealousy, stinginess, etc.

Reason is not always effective when it is up against desires and temptations. One is prone to prefer the immediate benefits rather than to strive for the ultimate ones, and accordingly to fall victim to his desires, selfishness, temptations, illusions, etc. When this inherent weakness is allowed to dominate in his nature, his struggle for the pursuit of worldly pleasures and for the realization of self-determined goals creates conflict, and can make him a miserable and pathetic creature.

Furthermore, intellect and reason function well within a certain scope, but these simply cannot, unaided, interpret what is beyond the senses. Man, more than other creature, enjoys a certain freedom of will and action. He often uses, or rather abuses, this freedom to go to extremes. In spite of possessing the faculty of intellect and reason, he is often cruel even to himself; knowing that something would be or could be ultimately harmful to himself, still he goes for it.

One may ask: Is this "crown of creation" destined to meet a miserable and pathetic end? Is there nothing provided for man to help him when the faculty of intellect and reason proves ineffective towards maintaining self-control and gaining self-understanding?

What can help man when the faculty of intellect and reason proves to be inadequate?

Having endowed man with the freedom of will and action, as all religions tell us, the Creator did not leave man to grope through life without guiding principles, ignorantly to abuse this freedom and to fall into harmful ways. Naturally, one could expect there to be something provided for man in order to complement the inadequacies of his intellect – something that can train man to optimally meet his legitimate needs for survival, and something that can *develop* him as a human being.

Whereas the animals are helped to survive through means of their innate directive forces of instinct and their sharper senses, man is bestowed with his own special higher form of directive force: intellect and reason. However, in those areas of life where even this becomes insufficient, there is a further directive force provided to help man – a kind of direct divine guidance, which unlike the other forms of directive forces, is not in-born, though each person has been given an in-born urge to discover it. Whenever he comes across such divine guidance, he is faced with the choice of accepting or rejecting it.

What is one to accept as genuine divine guidance? Aren't there false claims competing with truth? How can a person assess what is claimed to be the Creator's revealed guidance? What does such "revelation" do for man? Unlike other creatures, man has to use his freedom of choice, judiciously bringing into play his intellect and reason. The existence of an all-knowing, merciful God makes sense if this God is to provide man with the directive force needed for recognizing ultimate truth and realities.

How does faith in God help man and lead him to the correct path?

If one understands "faith in God" to mean simply the belief that "God exists", then certainly he will find that this element of faith is not strong enough to bond him to God. If the existence of a God is relevant to man, then one would expect this Almighty God to be concerned with the affairs of His creatures and actively to interact with them.

Thus, as the first and foremost step towards faith, one needs to have a correct concept of the God who exists, as well as a correct understanding of man's dependency upon God and an understanding of God's nearness to him/her. Such an understanding naturally generates an awareness in man that in relation to God he exists and moves through the journey of life in this world on his way back to his Creator, and thereby this gives him to understand a purpose and meaning in existence, while providing some divine input towards fulfilling his purpose. This scenario accordingly urges him to fulfill his duty towards God and to attain to the most beneficial relationship with Him.

How can mere man arrive at a correct concept of God?

God is ultimately beyond human description and imagination, as we have previously agreed.

Accordingly, any attempt by the finite human mind to reach out to the Infinite Reality will attempt to meet man's deficiencies in comprehension by means of speculations, by means of philosophical or mythical explanations, or by means of mystical experiences. In the concepts thus evolved by human efforts, God is bound up, to a greater or lesser extent, with the limitations of human beings or even of other creatures. It is easily observed cross-culturally that man's need for acknowledging a link to deity can be so strong that whatever cannot be understood or controlled by man may even be considered divine or worthy of adoration; the result is that anything – any man, animal, stone, earthly or heavenly object, any mythical figure, or even an ideology Ð- which is felt worthy of respect, honor, and veneration, may come to constitute a "god". With such misguided efforts, the correct concept of God then ends up completely put aside.

Thus, one can understand the limitation of man's own mental efforts to comprehend the unseen, ultimate Reality. Note that, according to all the 'prophets', God has mercifully spared man the arduous, rather impossible task of acquiring knowledge through his personal efforts alone, knowledge of the things beyond his reach. Therefore, not surprisingly, for attaining to a reliable concept of God we must depend upon *God Himself to instruct us*, i.e., through *divine revelation*. But how to recognize true prophets and true divine revelation? Have there always been prophets to guide man? Where have they been?

IV. GUIDANCE FOR MAN

A. DIVINE REVELATION

What do we mean by "Divine Revelation"?

The transcendence, glory and majesty of God are so awesome that a limited, mortal, flesh-and-blood human being is not equipped to receive direct contact with Him. Accordingly, in order to communicate with man, God chooses the means He knows to be appropriate. Through individuals whom He had chosen as His message-bearers – the Prophets – God has revealed to mankind a certain knowledge of imperceptible realities, man's position in the scheme of creation, man's mission in this life and the correct way for him to fulfill it, the means towards man's ultimate success or failure, and his final destiny. This constitutes the guidance and wisdom that man must have in order to confidently fulfill his intended potential as a "human" being and as the "crown of the creation".

In accord with such a concept of divine guidance these Prophets obediently delivered the divine message to their peoples, verbatim, as commanded by God, without claiming any personal credit in it. They were the first to abide by the revealed message, and served as an exemplary model for the practical application of this guidance in the daily life of man.

Cultural traditions of all ethnic groups the world over have preserved to a greater or lesser degree, at least traces of one or more divine prophetic message. Perhaps it is only a recent phenomenon that the academic establishment has tended to label all 'God-talk' as superstitious, denying the divine calling of prophets and questioning the legitimacy of all who have claimed to speak God's guidance.

Does divine revelation -- with its religious 'law' to guide behavior -- contradict science and reason? If it does, how can rational man accept such revelation? And if there is no contradiction, then why should man need guidance beyond his own individual or collective resources?

The divine revelation is no obstacle to what science and reason clarify. In its complementary role, the divine revelation rather takes man beyond his limitations, where man's faculties of reason and knowledge are rendered inadequate. For example, certain values or 'laws' need to be universally brought to each person's attention, ensuring that they be publicly required, and publicly cherished and adopted: personal virtues, such as compassionate aid to those in need; or personal spiritual practices, such as daily prayer; or social institutions, such as marriage; or social systems, such as criminal justice and business regulations.[7] Similarly man needs to be informed of certain unseen realities which affect his life, such as forces serving God's purposes (death, temptations to evil, man's free will, God's provision for man's needs, God's testing of man, destiny), inevitable events (the Day of Accountability); the final state of man's soul, manifesting either ultimate success ('Salvation', 'Paradise') or ultimate failure ('Condemnation', 'Hell') – having resulted directly from one's own intentions and behavior; the attributes of God (Merciful, All-Knowing, All-Wise, Provider, Just, etc.) and the scores of other matters.

By contrast to *divinely* revealed 'law' or guidelines, a proposition of *human* origin and one based upon reason may work well with reference to one aspect of

---

[7] Such social order may sound very familiar and comfortable to the Western reader, but does he/she ask where such wisdom has originated? Perhaps a forgotten prophet

man's multi-faceted nature, but may be harmful in another aspect, or of limited usefulness in the long run; or, it may suit one group of people but not mankind as a whole. This would mean that such man-evolved propositions do not comprehensively address the basic nature of man. The divine revelation, on the other hand, can reliably guide man to live in true harmony and balance, overcoming the conflict and chaos often arising between various elements of his nature. It is such outside guidance (such as the Ten Commandments in the Bible, for example) which constitutes real *wisdom*, since its source is the One who created man. Is it surprising that man's existence loses its meaning without an awareness of such guidance?

Did the Divine Message differ from place to place or from people to people?

The Creator and Sustainer of all, is not partial towards a particular country, clime, race or group of people to the exclusion of others in revealing His Message. He has raised up His Prophets and Messengers all over the world from time to time, as He has seen fit. These spokesmen for God have delivered a unified Message: the need for a responsibility to God Almighty and for righteous living, the concept that there is a single, unique Being Who alone is the Lord and Master of all creation, that this Being has given 'laws' for establishing order within the conduct of man, and that each individual is to return to Him and is held accountable to Him for how he would live his life.

Then how is it that we find differences between the various Faiths in their codes of law, conduct and rituals?

Broadly, we can recognize two kinds of differences:

(1) One kind of difference is the result of a departure from the pristine, common, unified message. This happened with the passage of time. No wonder that the purity and correct understanding of the revealed message was lost under the conditions existing in olden time: The writing materials were rudimentary and not readily available, and the means of written communication were limited. In addition, migrations of people over long distances and the limited educational interaction among them, were some other contributory factors. These situations allowed man-evolved ideologies and practices to creep into the revealed Faith – sometimes unintentionally and sometimes with good intentions. Thus different religious systems could take shape, and then, in the course of time, some of them became lost and others survived, acquiring a name derived from a personality, from a place or from a race. This is how today we find various Faiths differing in their codes of laws and rituals, whereas the religion of God remains one and the same. In spite of their various corruptions, these Faiths still retain basic concepts and values in common, owing to a single divine Source and owing to the same human nature of the recipients.

(2) The other kind is not a difference touching upon the basic character of religion or its fundamental teachings, but rather upon the legal codes which were linked with the original message. This is understandable because each Prophet had been sent locally for a particular people, and the legal codes had to serve the needs and the stage of development of that society and civilization. However, such distinctive legal variants were ultimately superficial and not of universal and lasting significance.

When the development of human civilization reached a stage that was mature enough to receive a simple message suited to all times and to all mankind, that final message was revealed through a prophet foretold within the Scriptures of all previous religions, and that message has since then been preserved intact. Thus differences of all kinds were circumvented, whether such differences came as later historical developments or whether they were inherent local differences from the beginning. And a universal, comprehensive code of life was made available to mankind in the form of a Book, exemplified in the teachings of a prophet who himself had received that final revelation.

This came about in Arabia at what may be described as a central meeting place of Europe-Africa-Asia, sandwiched between the two super powers of the seventh century, Byzantium/Rome to the west and Persia to the east. The prophet's name was Muhammad (peace be upon him[8]), and the Book is called "the Qur'an" (Koran), meaning "the readings/recitations", or texts revealed by God as the quintessential message for mankind. The content of the Qur'an and the tone of voice with which it purports to speak from God, both, endear this Book to Muslims and attract non-Muslims, often catching them 'off-guard' with its profound insight into human psychology.

B. THE CULMINATION OF REVEALED GUIDANCE

How can the Qur'an be singled out as the religious book for special mention? Are there no other revealed scriptures in the world containing truth and wisdom?

No doubt there are other scriptures in the world which do contain revealed truth and wisdom. But these scriptures, as we have them today, are interwoven with extraneous or unrevealed material. This would include the more obvious (i.e., statements of historical context, descriptions and events, exegetical comments, philosophical treatises, literary allusions or quotations) in such a way that it is probably all but impossible now to sift the original content from the later modifications, except with the presence of a set standard by which to judge. It is a different matter that the people who have faith in a particular scripture may not realize this, or that they would ignore this aspect out of reverence for their scripture.

This dilution or adulteration can be made clear if one objectively looks into the dependability of any particular scripture. Answers to certain questions, such as the following, need to be posed in order to determine the authenticity of a scripture:

- Does the book itself claim to have a divine origin, and to be universal in scope, or is it a scholarly compilation of history and literature in addition to prophetic word? How could such claims be put to the test?

- Who is the author of the book (books or sections of books)? When was it written? For what purpose?

- How was the book, or its component parts, compiled and transmitted from generation to generation?

---

[8] This eulogy phrase (or its abbreviation: pbuh) is used by Muslims after the mention of the name of any prophet as an expression of respect and reverence for him. In publications the phrase is traditionally inserted after each mention

- Do we have an original copy? If not, at what point in history was our earliest copy transcribed? How many generations or centuries had passed from the time of its prophet until the transcription of our copies?

- Do we depend upon translations? Has the translation been made from original texts or from a copy of the original, or even from another translated version? Can this be verified?

- Are our earliest copies of the original texts free from mutilation / alteration / loss?

We know that the ancient scriptures were orally transmitted for extended periods of time before being committed to written form. Because of this, it was naturally difficult to preserve them intact in their original form. Oral memory can be sometimes thematic rather than verbatim, such that incidents and their narrative structures were preserved, but words were rendered typically rather than in precise wording. Thus certain elements of meaning are missing, or coded, or left ambiguous. This could lead to giving to a text a meaning or connotation which it did not originally carry. Moreover, such scriptures tend to be influenced by cultural categories and traditional color and hence would readily assimilate such things as folk wisdom, folk tales, legends, and fabulous tales that generally circulate within any local culture.

When we come to the Qur'an, on the other hand, we find that this Scripture preserves and perpetuates the truths as revealed to Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) in its original language, Arabic – which is one of the top ten languages living yet today – and in its original form, verbatim. Things contrary to the truth, which had slipped into the earlier scriptures, can now be, at least partially, sorted out with reference to the Qur'an. And where the Qur'an refers to local 7th century Arab culture and tales, it does so in a way that sets straight some controversy and that teaches a truth thereby. Once we have a final Revelation, pure and authentic, complete and comprehensive in itself, supported by a reliable exegesis (a body of explanation) with practical application in the well-documented life history of the Prophet, there is no reason to look for something further. This is the Last and Final Testament, so to speak.

Does the Qur'an mention anything about the earlier scriptures?

The Qur'an does not disclaim the earlier scriptures, nor does it declare itself as a competitor or rival to them. On the contrary, it confirms them (including those whose names are not mentioned in the Qur'an), and even makes it an article of faith for Muslims to believe in the earlier messages, messengers and their scriptures. This is because the source of all these scriptures is the same, and the directives provided in them were of a universal nature. The Qur'an states:

> *He has revealed unto you the Scripture with the truth, confirming that which was [revealed] before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, for a guidance to mankind, and has revealed the Criterion [of right and wrong]...* (3:3-4)

> *And, verily, this is also contained in the Scriptures of former people.* (26:196)

Numerous Qur'anic verses refer to the continuity of the revealed guidance from the time of the appearance of man on earth; the message of the Qur'an did not appear in isolation at a random point of time, but rather as a response to the adulteration of the previous scriptures, and in response to the irreversible state of misdirection or deviation within the various religious communities – irreversible

except with an authoritative, corrective, fresh text.

Does this mean that the Qur'an does not introduce a new Faith?

The Qur'an does not claim to introduce a new Faith. It describes its role as being corrective, complementary and culminative in nature, preserving and protecting what was revealed to mankind through earlier prophets, and completing and stabilizing this guidance from the "Lord of the Worlds" for the future. Thus, the Qur'an describes itself as a 'Reminder' to mankind, and as the 'Criterion' of right and wrong, in addition to its other labels such as 'Guidance', 'Wisdom', 'Light', 'Mercy', 'Blessing', etc., varying according to context.

It is pertinent to point out here that the earlier revealed scriptures, even in their present versions, still contain prophesies[9] foretelling the advent of Mohammed (may God's peace be upon him), as the bearer of the final and universal message from God, thus indicating a common source and a link connecting all the revealed scriptures one to another. This linkage gives evidence that the Qur'an as the final Revelation from God and the enduring guidance to mankind is the consummation of the original true Faith, rather than a deviation from it.

Who was this man Mohammed? Where does this Prophet fit into God's scheme of revelation to man?

Mohammed (may God's peace be upon him) son of Abdullah was a descendant of Prophet Abraham (may peace be upon him) through his first son Ishmael (peace be upon him). Muslims regard Mohammed to be the last and final in the long chain of prophets sent by God to various people at different times. Like Prophet Moses, he was both a prophet and a head of state.

He was born into a noble Arab family in the year 570 CE in the city of Mecca located in present-day Saudi Arabia. The area was populated with predominantly pagan tribes worshiping 360 different gods housed in the *Ka'bah* (a cubic-shaped structure), which had been built (some say rebuilt) by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael (may peace be upon them) for the worship of the unique and universal God. This "House" used to attract pilgrims from all around the area.

In the midst of a corrupt and decadent society, Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) was a man of the most upright character even from his childhood, enjoying great respect and popular trust among his people. He used to seclude himself to a nearby cave meditating and contemplating, as he had never liked the idea of worshiping any other than the One True God. At the age of 40, he started receiving the divine revelation, and preaching the concept of *submission* to the matchless, awesome God and of worshiping Him alone. At first, only a few people followed him, and he met with severe resistance and persecution. After 13 years of struggle and a decade of persecution, he, along with his followers, immigrated to Medina, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Mecca, to establish himself and the new community of believers in a more congenial environment. He remained there for the next 10 years, striving unyieldingly to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by God, which he successfully completed within a span totaling 23 years, before he breathed his last at the age of 63. He left behind no wealth of property, yet his legacy of a dynamic world Faith mobilized not only the whole Arabian Peninsula but also rapidly reached

---

[9] Such prophecies have been traced in Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Hindu Scriptures. A detailed account is available in Muhammad in the Bible, by Dr. Jamal Badawi, first published in 'Al-Ittehad', MSA, Indiana, USA; and in Muhammad in the Parsi, Hindoo and Buddhist Scriptures by A. H. Vidyarthi and U. Ali, published in India (1983)

the far corners of the world within the following century.[10]

Was then the Qur'an written by Prophet Mohammed?

No. The Qur'an does not contain a single wording which was a product of the Prophet's mind, or composed by the hand of any other human being for that matter, nor does it have any expression in his own wording. Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) was not the author of the Qur'an in any sense, but rather he was a human intermediary for receiving the revelation from God and communicating it to the people, word for word, as and when he received it.

Prophet Mohammed's own sayings and teachings have been collected in other books, separate from the Qur'an, and compiled by his Companions and by the scholars of the generation that followed. These are called *Hadith* books. The style, wording and literary characteristics of Mohammed's person in the Hadith books are strikingly different from those of the Qur'an.

Although Mohammed (pbuh) did not compose the text of the Qur'an, he did dictate it publicly to various scribes (amanuenses), who recorded it in writing. He was also responsible for overseeing the ordering of the various bits of oral text into today's resulting form.

On what basis can the Qur'an be regarded as a genuine divine revelation?

If one approaches and examines the Qur'an putting aside his preconceived notions, he is presented with specific claims, which he is challenged to accept based upon the merits of the evidences.

The Qur'an itself, *unlike* other scriptures, makes explicit, direct and repeated claims to being verbatim, authoritative divine revelation. Both the contents and its manner of presentation constitute evidence for its supernatural source. As do the insights and viewpoint it reveals; its inimitable and unique literary standard, language style and tone; its internal consistency; its remarkable intact preservation; its accurate description of the phenomena of nature, in accord with modern science; the fulfillment of its specific prophecies; its pervasive and sustained impact on humanity.

This subject is further discussed in the Appendix.

How can a centuries-old guidance be relevant to modern times?

The holy scriptures of all the world religions are centuries old. Among them is the Qur'an – the final one – which is unique in having come to us as a completely

---

[10] Volumes of historical details of the life of the Prophet are recorded. For some recommended books on the subject in English, the reader may refer to:

Muhammad - his life based on the earliest sources, by Martin Lings, The Islamic Texts Society, London, First published in 1983.
The Life of Muhammad, by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, Islamic Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1987.
The Life of Muhammad, by Tahia al-Ismail, Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., London, 1988.
The Life of Muhammad, by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, North American Trust Publications, first published in 1976.

preserved book, a comprehensive guidance. It addresses human nature, and deals with those aspects of one's life which lead to success and failure in the ultimate sense. Since the Qur'an is for all mankind and for all times, it does not lack sensitivity to varying historical and sociological conditions. Human civilizations and cultures may change, but human nature – like the laws of nature – remains unchanged. While on the one hand the Qur'an does not compromise on the essentials, i.e., the basic truths (such as, monotheism, the purposefulness of life, the accountability of man) and values (such as, benevolence, family ties, fair trade policies, patience), on the other hand, there is room for flexibility in the matters related to changing circumstances.

C. SELF-SURRENDER TO GOD

How is revealed guidance to be put to practical application in life?

If God is the Creator and the Provider, and if His requirements are based upon His absolute knowledge and wisdom, then it is but rational for man to have confidence in, be committed to, and abide by what the Creator has willed for him. A sense of commitment and a realization of accountability before God, naturally prompts man to express his faith by way of submission to the revealed will of God. The nature of man is such that unless he is held accountable for his behavior, he cannot successfully fulfill his responsibility.

In fact, man has already learned to submit, consciously or unconsciously, to God's laws of nature in his outward or physico-biological existence and growth. What remains for him, then, is to accept God's revealed religious or moral laws and to adopt them in his inward expressions of his personal existence and development. Willful deference to the Creator's prescribed ways of human living is the means by which a person's conscious awareness of himself can be most successfully integrated within the totality of his awareness. This is the way of submission[11] that enables man to overcome an attitude of meaninglessness and helps him to attain to personal tranquility and peace.[12]

Revealed guidance, as inscribed in the Qur'an, has been translated into action in the person of Prophet Mohammed (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him), who served as a living example and a role model for the believers, so as to give a concrete form to the divine 'laws' revealed amidst the varied conditions of human existence. His patterns of behavior are well-documented and available to us today.

Wouldn't such "submission" mean that man's own freedom of action would be curtailed?

If by "freedom" it is implied that one has a license to do whatever he wants regardless of the consequences, then in such a case, man is largely "free" to make mistakes and to land in hard-to-reverse problems and miseries. This would be, in reality, not a freedom worthy of the name but rather enslavement to one's own ego or whimsical desire. In fact, the mistakes of individual unforesightful and uncaring leaders have often caused intense suffering to millions of their subjects.

A little thought will make it clear that no matter how 'free' and independent

[11] In the Arabic language, the word for 'submission' is "*islam*".
[12] 'Peace' is another connotation of the word *islam*.

anyone may consider himself to be, he does submit to some authority, for his life is oriented around some goal, and his loyalty and devotion are given to someone or something, be it a human being such as a wise or dear person, a religious figure, a philosopher, or a ruler, or even some man-made ideology, some philosophy or some 'ism'. Freedom, in its true sense, does not mean being exempt from all limitations; rather it means being free from enslavement and servitude to everyone and everything that is not worthy to be one's master or controller, nor worthy of devotion. The divine guidance clarifies how man can and does choose the authority upon which he depends. He is advised to make his choice with care and discernment.

Freedom of choice does not apply simply to the various single decisions which one makes every day, but in fact to the most fundamental decision that overall directs the whole of man's existence. Thus, the choice that really matters is between the two possible options:

i. to be limited to certain human ideas, notions and desires, thus being the servant of human masters living by one or another of man-made values, ideologies, philosophies and doctrines,

or,

ii. to consciously and voluntarily commit oneself to being bound by the perfect standards, criteria and laws of the Wise, Almighty God Himself, thus becoming aligned with (i.e., being the servant of) the Real Master, Who can fully guide and give meaning to man's life.

D. OBSTACLES TO PURE FAITH

What holds people back from accepting the pristine revealed Faith?

It is a natural tendency in man to continue adhering to any Faith or concept of religion in which he is programmed by his early upbringing. The intimacy, love, respect, loyalty, and hence **emotional attachment** to one's "own" Faith, like to his own culture, language and heritage, become intense enough to make a person blind to the truth apparent before his own eyes. Once someone has put on red glasses (i.e., developed a bias), even a white object appears red to him. And a perfectly white object appears all the more perfectly red! Only by taking off these red glasses will he discover his mistake.

There is a line of reasoning that usually crosses the minds of people in justification of what they follow: if their Faith were devoid of truth, the Faith would not have **survived for centuries** and there would not now still be millions of followers; how could all of them, particularly the noted scholars and devoted learned men of that Faith, be consistently wrong? There is a fallacy in the argument which they do not notice due to their emotional attachment to their Faith. They fail to understand that the same defense is made by people of every other Faith too! Either all of them must be right – which is impossible due to the diversity in concepts – or there has to be some other reason, such as a momentum to continue in any habit or social convention and to follow the social norms of one's group.

One should realize that one's personal attachment to a particular view or dogma is one thing and the objective truth is another. For example, one may justify the notion that God, the Creator of the universe, had to appear in human form (i.e., an "incarnation") in order for Him to be able to understand the human mentality and

feelings. Such a **philosophical proposition** would have to be argued at the expense of the indivisible, 'wholly other' uniqueness of God and His omniscience; but of course a philosophical construct is man's own supposition, not based upon any evidence from God's guidance or upon His Messenger's teaching. A myth, a conjecture, or a philosophy, no matter how emotionally or academically appealing, is not to be accounted as truth.

"**Faith-healing**" or the performance of certain miraculous acts is another factor that prompts people to be drawn to the Faith of the person who performs such acts, assuming his Faith to be the correct Faith. One should realize that correctness of Faith cannot be established simply on the basis of certain **extraordinary acts**, and furthermore that this phenomenon is not limited to any one particular Faith. We find persons performing such acts within probably all of the major Faiths throughout the world. It is a fact that Prophets of God did perform extraordinary feats, but they did this so as to give corroborating evidence in support of their prophetic mission and so as to draw the attention of their viewers to the path of God. However, these Prophets have also warned that even false prophets could perform convincing miracles. God has bestowed certain powers even on non-believers[13], in which case these miraculous deeds may become a test of faith for believers.

If one's choice of a Faith is guided only by the heart (raw emotions), or when the role of the mind (reason) is subdued, we call this a '**blind faith**'. On the other hand, it is true that the pure Faith, is one in which the mind is assured and the heart is gratified, i.e., when the mind and heart play their complementary roles in a balanced way. Nor does the pure Faith emphasize the mind at the expense of the heart.

What indicates the true Faith?

As long as there are various options among mankind's Faiths and each claims to be the correct one, a question naturally arises: how to decide which one(s) should merit acceptance?

A fair approach would be to set out certain criteria on the basis of which an evaluation of any Faith can be made. These criteria could be as follows:

a) <u>Concerning God</u>: A true Faith is expected to

- originate from God, since any source of knowledge of the 'unknowables' or imperceptible realities, other than the Creator Himself, cannot be considered reliable, final and absolute truth.
- give a clear concept of God, since a finite human mind cannot correctly arrive at a conception of the Infinite Being, and the correct man-God relationship cannot be established without such a correct concept.
- explain definitively about our relationship with God and the way He is to be dealt with (i.e., sought, approached, responded to and worshipped, etc.) and how He wants to deal with us.

b) <u>Concerning man</u>: A true Faith is expected to

---

13 It is a fact that such acts have been performed not only by 1) God's prophets and 2) pious believers but also by 3) ordinary believers and 4) non-believers. The Arabic terms that distinguish the nature and value of such acts in various contexts are *mu'jezah, karamah, maunah, and istedraj*, respectively.

- explain definitively the aim and purpose of man's existence, the way that leads to his ultimate success in this and the next life, and his final destiny.

- provide guidance in all practical aspects of his life, whether physical, moral spiritual, at an individual level as well as at a collective level.

- point one to solutions for all his problems.

- treat all humans with equality and brotherhood, not differentiating on the basis of race, territory, wealth, color, position, gender.

c) Concerning the teachings: A true Faith is expected to be expressed in teachings which are

- practical, and within the reach of every human being.

- universal in application regardless of time, place, or condition.

- rational, and free from confusions, mystery and speculation.

- integrative of the physical and spiritual aspects of life.

d) Concerning the scriptures: A true Faith is expected to be based upon a scripture which is

- authentic and dependable as a revealed scripture, whose historical origin can be traced, verified and attested to.

- available in its original form and language, unchanged and complete.

- free from contradictions, giving clear guidance.

- descriptive of man as he knows himself to be, satisfactorily addressing his innermost concerns and longings.

V. RATIONAL RELIGION

What can be regarded as the true concept of Faith?

A Faith that does not demand any effort on the part of its followers, and does not affect one's conduct of living as an individual and as a building-block in his society, or that offers a mere set of mythological or conjectural beliefs and mechanical rituals, cannot be regarded as a Faith that should matter.

A Faith that affirms consequential revealed truth, and accordingly, that requires one to surrender to the truth affirmed, and to strive towards goodness, knowledge, justice, etc., would have distinctive elements of a correct Faith. The followers of such a Faith would have accepted the divine reality, acknowledged God's

authority, and made a personal commitment to God's revealed standards of behavior. This concept is ingrained in the Arabic language word *islam*, and is institutionalized as a world religion called "Islam"[14].

What is the difference between a true Faith and an individual's 'faith' or trust in God? Is there a distinction between "Islam" and "*islam*"?

At the historical and sociological levels, we talk about Prophet Mohammed (pbuh), the Book revealed to him, and the community of those who have followed the Qur'anic model with the Prophet as their mentor. The Islamic Faith however stands on the shoulders of all of the prophets and of all of their messages, commissioned by the Creator throughout history. The Islamic Faith affirms the beliefs, insights and wisdom divinely given to all former generations, peoples, and their prophets, setting the record straight on matters where they had gone wrong. Regarding the unseen world, it testifies to the existence of God, of His angelic and divinely commissioned human messengers, of their messages of guidance, of a Day of Reckoning, of a Punishment and a Reward, and of God's controlling hand in all the affairs of the universe. Regarding the world at hand, the Islamic Faith rests five duties upon its adherents:

1) To *acknowledge belief* in the uncompromised wholeness and wholesomeness of the awesome deity, wholly independent and distinct from His creatures (i.e., "monotheism") and belief in His merciful guidance to mankind through His prophets, including the seventh century Mohammed, a descendant of Abraham's first son, Ishmael.

2) To remember God continuously throughout each day, having established the habit of a ritual performance of *prayer*, scheduled in reference to 5 daily positions of the sun (namely, dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, dusk, and nightfall).

3) To bind together the community of believers through acts of *charity*, of mutual aid and encouragement in right living. A networking of trust and 'social security" is carried out on personal initiative, anticipating the final reward to come from mankind's common Creator.

4) To *fast* from dawn to dusk daily throughout the lunar month of *Ramadan* in an act of self-discipline and social solidarity, seeking God's forgiveness and empowerment, in repentance and humility. Abstention from gratifying the physical needs of the body during the daylight hours is accompanied by special attention to the inner person as expressed by the tongue and by avoidance of harmful or hurtful responses to provocative circumstances.

5) To participate once in a lifetime, if at all possible, in an annual world-wide *pilgrimage* to the holy places historically associated with Prophet Abraham (pbuh) at Mecca.

Whereas the true "Faith" is a function of rightly-guided communities sustained across time, on the other hand, one's personal "faith" in God and

[14] 'Islam' with a capital 'I' is the name of a religion followed by a community of people, and defined by a set of beliefs and practices. However, it may be emphasized here that this name has to be understood in its functional sense more than as an identification label, as the Qur'an has used this word in this way for describing the faith of all the previous Prophets of God and their followers as a mutually supporting and interactive community of God-conscious persons. In the Arabic language there is no capitalization to distinguish the functional meaning of '*islam*' from what in English is referred to as 'Islam', while in the Qur'an the focus remains upon the functional sense of this word.

dependence upon His provision and wise control leads to the repeated act of aligning oneself with God's requirements. This "submission" or "self-surrender" or "abandoning the control of one's decision-making" to God's perfect guidance is a concept signified by the Arabic language word "islam". When God's "Law" or revealed regulations are accepted as an expression of the highest wisdom for man, a person draws near to his Creator's blessings and realizes his own internal peace and contentment.

Like "faith" and "Faith", so also "islam" and "Islam" stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other. A person in submission (*islam*) to God would naturally seek the company of like-minded persons, the community (Islamic Faith) of those who have historically preserved and perpetuated a knowledge of the prophets and their messages. Conversely, a person (Muslim or non-Muslim) who finds himself in the company of an Islamic community so as to witness their practice of faith is drawn to likewise submit himself to such a system in order to share in their divine blessings and to attain thereby to his own personal fulfillment.

What characteristic features of Islam typically appeal to a person of another Faith?

This depends upon that person's background, his level of understanding of the Islamic Faith, and his interest in the matters of faith. However, we can generalize certain relevant aspects.

Islam is a Faith, a world-view, an attitude towards life, as well as a behavioral way of life, all, at the same time. It is an organized religion, non-territorial, non-ethnic, and color-blind in its nature, treating humanity as one brotherhood – all of us being equally the children of Adam. Its simplicity, rationality, practicability, and its application in all aspects of man's existence, individual and collective, are its strength. Balance and moderation characterize its approach to life. Absolute justice is promised for all creatures at the end of their earthly road.

Islam is a manner of life which continuously remembers and thanks God, while sharing directly and unashamedly in the needs of one's fellow beings, and which realigns the believer's attentions and undertakings, bringing him into conformity with his created nature and allowing and strengthening his direct relationship with God. The believer knows that he – together with all others – will be accountable for his life, and that God will judge him in utter fairness (the more good he does, the more reward he will merit) on a final Day of Judgment; hence, he is encouraged to manage his life, his relationship with others, his possessions, etc., in a thoughtful and a conscientious way. For Muslims, every activity in life is meaningful, purposeful and sacred, as Islam does not regard life as divisible into separate compartments: secular and spiritual.

Islam is followed by over a fifth of the world community, with the largest sectors in Asia and Africa, but now is rapidly spreading in Europe and America. The English-speaking nations are now gradually overcoming their millennium-long prejudice against a people and a period of history (7th/8th century Arabs) so long unknown to them for various reasons. People of other Faiths with a universal or global orientation of mind are finding a natural appeal in this rational, Creator-prescribed way of life. With their newly discovered knowledge comes to many of them a feeling of coming-back home and a commitment to a satisfying understanding of themselves in a God-centered world.

Can a person be compelled to accept this divinely-revealed Faith?

There cannot be any compulsion in matters of faith. A Faith neither helps a person who accepts it under pressure, nor is forced 'conversion' acceptable to God. One's faith in God has to emerge from a natural and deep conviction in the heart. Man has been shown the right path and the wrong path, and the consequences of following each. He is also given the power of thinking and reasoning, and the freedom to use these powers for deciding and choosing the right course. It is left for the individual to decide, whether he tries to understand its implications (so as to accept this divine call to revealed Faith), or whether he follows his own limited and temporal purposes and desires (so as to reject it). The Qur'an states:

> *There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error; hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God, has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way; for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.* (2:256)

> *And say: 'The truth [has now come] from your Lord'; let, then, him who wills believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it ...* (18:29)

Muslims as a community, however, have a moral duty to meaningfully invite all people to the path of God, in the assurance that it is God alone who guides anyone to true faith.

> *... Behold [O Mohammed] thy duty is no more than to deliver the message; for God sees all that is in [the hearts of] His servants.* (3:20)

> *Invite [all] to the way of the Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and gracious; for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His path, and who are the right-guided.* (16:125)

What is your message, then?

Our message is plain and simple. Put your faith in God. Trust Him for personal enlightment, guidance and daily provision. Do not suspend rational faculties when judging claims to ultimate reality and truth. Upon this foundation submit yourself to the care of God Almighty, doing your own part to live rightly.

One's ultimate success and 'salvation' depend upon his personal acceptance of the right Path and upon his commitment to following it. One is to be cautioned against continuing deliberately in any wrong choice, inasmuch as there might never be the chance for a comeback to redress or repent. Each person is responsible to his Creator. This is a serious trust not to be taken lightly. With this trust goes the possibility of failure, loss and condemnation, due to negligence and personal unconcern; on the other hand there is the potential for great reward and gain. One cannot afford to live oblivious to ultimate truth, and be contented with whatever he might have been taught or picked up piecemeal. A conscious and considered choice is called for. All human faculties should be brought into play.

The imitation of a friendly or a popular figure cannot reliably point to the truth. Neither can blind commitment to the status quo. In an age when human knowledge has multiplied many-fold, man can free himself of the bonds of unexamined traditions and can choose his Faith with careful consideration, through reflection and acquisition of knowledge, out of understanding and awareness, a Faith that is prescribed by the God who created us, (a Faith which appeals to reason, and whose truth can be trusted and validated. Admittedly, this may not be an easy task, as one certainly requires courage and perseverance to disentangle himself from the

assumptions and beliefs to which he has grown accustomed. In order to accomplish this, one needs to look into himself and define what it is he needs in order to become psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially "whole". One must come to know with certainty what is his mandate as a human being, and how he can fulfill this privilege and responsibility.

Is it so surprising that man, an honored creature of God, should be willing, and even eager, to submit to his Creator's will, and should model his life accordingly? One can find that divine will comprehensively presented within the Qur'an, enabling a person to truly know himself, so as to attain to real peace and fulfillment, and guiding him to ultimate success.

> *O mankind! There has now come unto you an admonition from your Lord, and a cure for all [the ill] in your heart – and for those who believe, a guidance and a mercy.* (10:57)

> *Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of God! To a happy state shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity, and truly lost is he who buries it [in darkness].* (91:7-10)

> *... And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community; but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! ...* (5:48)

APPENDIX

THE QUR'AN AS OPTIMAL SCRIPTURE

Muslims regard the Qur'an as the uncorrupted, unabridged, and unembellished "Book of God" – a scripture whose contents and arrangement are directly from God. But a new reader may raise the question: "Why should I believe it to be 'the Book of God', on what basis?"

If one examines it with the expectations of finding it similar to some other sacred religious book, he may face some difficulty; but if he approaches it without preconceived notions and assumptions, its persuasive nature begins to impress itself upon him. The Qur'an is a unique book in its style and methodology, its textual arrangement, in its approach to the problems of man and society, in its preservation and transmission across generations, and in even other respects.

A. THE INTERNAL EVIDENCES

The Qur'an itself makes explicit and authoritative **claims** for its divine source and authenticity, and denies any other source. In fact, the Qur'an is the only scripture[15] that

[15] Christians often quote a verse (2 Timothy 3:16) to prove that the New Testament is the "Word of God". They do not realize that the New Testament became a book several centuries after Jesus (pbuh) and that Jesus never saw this book, or approved it or its contents, or in any way affirmed for it a 'divine

makes such clear, unqualified, and far-reaching assertions:

- For its **divine source**:

The Revelation of this Book is, without any doubt, from the Lord of the worlds. (32:2)

The Revelation of the Book is from God, the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom. (46:2)

This Qur'an is not such as to have come from other than God;... (10:37)

- For its **truth**:

And verily, it is Truth of assured certainty. (69:51)

Verily, We have revealed this Book unto you [O Mohammed!] setting forth the Truth for [the benefit of all] mankind; ... (39:41)

...And it is indeed a Glorious Book. No kind of falsehood can come at it from before or behind it. It is sent down by the One [who is] full of wisdom, worthy of all praise. (41:41-42)

For the **Guidance** provided in it:

This is the Book wherein there is no doubt; a guidance to those who are God-conscious. (2:2)

Verily, this Qur'an does guide to that which is most upright;... (17:9)

O mankind! There has now come unto you an admonition from your Lord, and a cure for all [the ill] in your heart - and for those who believe, a guidance and a mercy. (10:57)

And it goes beyond untestable claims, as it **argues**:

Do they not consider the Qur'an [with care]? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy. (4:82)

and it even **challenges**:

Say: 'If the whole of mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof even if they backed up each other with help and support. (17: 88)

And if ye are in doubt as to [the divine origin of] what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah[16] *like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your doubts are true.* (2:23)

The Qur'anic verses, wherein God directly speaks to or addresses mankind, also imply the claim that the source is God.

---

origin'. In fact, the word "Scripture" in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to the Jewish writings. For a Christian to make the word "Scripture" include the New Testament is to put his faith in the historical Church, rather than in the teachings of Jesus himself.

16 'Surah' is an Arabic term which is often translated as 'chapter'.

Verily, I -- I alone -- am God; there is no deity save Me. Hence, worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me. (20:14)

And We have indeed created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six eons, and no weariness could ever touch Us. (50:38)

B. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES

1. **The Character and Nature of the Person** who presented this scripture and claimed it to be the work of God:

Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), is a historical figure and an extensive record of his life history and sayings is available. He was so well-known for his honesty, integrity, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and impeccable character that his people had given him the titles of '*Al-Sadiq*' (the Truthful) and '*Al-Ameen*' (the Trustworthy) even before he made the claim of receiving God's revelation. He lived a very simple and pious life without self-interest in personal material gains, nor was he aspiring to position or name.

A claim from such a person cannot be rejected out of hand. If he claims that the Qur'an which he presented to the people is the work of God, it certainly deserves credibility or at least a serious examination.

2. **The Lack of Literacy in the Prophet:**

Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) did not know how to read and write, and yet he "produced" such a literary work that it took by surprise and threatened the dominance of the foremost literary people of that time, continuing to stand as a challenge ever since. He referred to the Qur'an as his miracle, and it remains a living miracle.

If an unlettered person presents such an eloquent work, it must mean that its source is other than himself. And if this person is known to be eminently trustworthy and truthful, should not *this* claim of his be just as acceptable?

3. **Its Language:**

The Qur'an is the highest and most perfect piece of literature in Arabic, the language known for its literary competition and brilliance. The literary style of the Qur'an is so sublime, powerful and moving that one who knows Arabic cannot help going into ecstasy. Whatever is stated is phrased in the fittest words and expressed in the most appropriate manner. Its unique and exalted quality is completely different from the speech of any human being (including Prophet Mohammed himself, pbuh), before and since. Even the enemies of the Prophet, despite their most strenuous efforts, were unable to imitate it. The Qur'an itself challenges man to produce something similar if he has doubts about its divine origin.

Human authorship cannot be ascribed to a scripture with such an amazing and inimitable tone and linguistic excellence.

4. **Its Consistency:**

The revealed message of the Qur'an was brought through Mohammed (pbuh) over a period of twenty-three years, piece by piece, in different situations and in different historical stages of his prophetic mission. Yet, from the first revelation to the last, it is totally consistent within itself, and is free from any contradiction, any confusion or any development in linguistic structure or literary standard.

Any book penned by a human author over such a long period of time under varying circumstances, would not achieve this perfect consistency.

5. **Its Contents:**

Man has no scientific or philosophical source for knowledge about the Ultimate Reality, yet such questions are answered in the Qur'an with the utmost degree of surety and sublimity. It does not present man with mysteries regarding faith. It reveals not God Himself, the Transcendent and Unknowable, but rather it reveals God's attributes and His will in a pure, clear and unambiguous manner. It provides a vivid description of man's position in the scheme of creation, of his purpose of existence, of his success and salvation, of the life hereafter, of punishment and reward, and of the man-God interrelationship.

Alongside the spiritual insight, it provides man with a comprehensive and practical guidance, norms and values, rights and duties, governing all aspects of his life, both individual and collective. It discusses those aspects of his life which lead to his real success or failure. It is guidance in the widest sense of the word.

Such sublime concepts and ideas based upon such profound wisdom and depth, as embodied so powerfully in this Book, certainly point to its divine source.

6. **Its Scientific Accuracy:**

The Qur'an is essentially a book of guidance for mankind; it is not a book of science, nor does it store cryptic notes on scientific facts. However, when it makes mention of natural phenomena, the description totally conforms to the established scientific facts. There are statements concerning the natural world that could not have been discovered by any human being until fairly recent times using instruments such as telescope and the microscope, etc.[17]

In view of the level of scientific knowledge in Mohammed's (pbuh) time, about 14 centuries ago, it is inconceivable that such statements in the Qur'an could have been the work of man.

7. **Its Intact Preservation:**

[17] Maurice Bucaille, a French surgeon, has given a detailed account of his objective investigations on this aspect in his book entitled: The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science - The Holy Scriptures examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge, first published in Paris, 1976.

The Qur'an, as it was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh), was written down in full, directly from the recitation of the Prophet (pbuh) during his lifetime. Its preservation has also been ensured through complete memorization, from the time it was revealed till this day, with an uninterrupted continuity. In fact, the ease with which the Qur'an can be memorized is shown by the fact that it is committed to memory by thousands of non-Arabic speaking people, even children as young as ten years old. It has remained intact to the present day in its entire content, word for word. Nothing has been added to it and nothing was lost from the original revelation. This is a matter well-documented historically and is beyond dispute. In fact, as the Qur'an claims, God Himself has assured us of its preservation:

> *It is We Ourselves who have, without doubt, sent down this message; and it is We who shall assuredly guard it [from all corruption].* (15:9)

After all, being the final Revelation it needed to be preserved for all times. No other book has ever been preserved for this length of time in such a remarkable way, whether another scripture or any other classical writing.

8. **Fulfillment of its Prophecies:**

The Qur'an records the foretelling of certain events, and generally under circumstances in which their fulfillment had seemed unlikely. But history testifies that each and every prophecy has been fulfilled. Examples:

- The victory of the Romans over the Persians within a few years (30:2-4); this was prophesied at a time when the Romans had been decisively defeated and there was no apparent chance for their come back.
- The victorious and bloodless entry of Muslims into Mecca (48:27); establishment of Muslim power and domination (24:55).
- Abu Lahab remaining a disbeliever (111:1-4), in spite of the ardent hopes of Mohammed (pbuh) for his uncle.
- The preservation of the Qur'an (15:9), in spite of its powerful enemies.

9. **Its Impact on Humanity:**

The Qur'an has changed, and continues to change the lives of millions of individuals, even of the extremely wicked and criminals. It is the only Book in the world that has had such a wide, deep, and all-embracing impact as a book on the thoughts, ethics, and cultures of people from different traditions all over the globe, and to an unparalleled degree. Within a few generations, it transformed a people, from a disorganized group of warring tribes into a civilized international community, and gave them a distinct identity. Its impact is not confined to its believers alone; in different ways it has influenced human history and culture in Europe (during the middle ages and Renaissance) as well as in Asia and Africa continuously for 14 centuries. Its impact continues in ever widening areas, well-grounded in the historical and linguistic scholarship, by which to interpret it.

No book authored by man has ever produced such a persisting revolutionary change in man, continuing across time and space.